

Let's stay safe this cold and flu season!



Over-the-Counter Medicine: What's on the Label

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) requires all over-the-counter (OTC) medicine labels to display information in the same order and style. This makes it easier to read and understand medicine labels. Reading the medicine label and following the directions will help you take the correct medicine safely.

What is on the label?	What does this section tell you?
Active Ingredient/Purpose:	Ingredient(s) that makes the medicine work, the amount in each pill or teaspoon, and its' action (e.g., cough suppressant).
Inactive ingredients:	Ingredients needed to add color or flavor or to preserve the medicine.
Uses:	Symptoms or problems the medicine will treat or prevent.
Warnings:	Who should not take the medicine. When you should call your doctor. When you should stop taking the medicine. Activities to avoid while taking the medicine. Possible side-effects and interactions. To check with a doctor before using medicine if you are pregnant or breastfeeding. To keep medicines away from children.
Directions:	How to take it. How much to take (recommended dosing by age). How often to use it. How long to take it.
Other information:	How to store the medicine. Required information about other ingredients (such as the amount of calcium, potassium or sodium the product contains).



The label may also tell you:

- The expiration date (products should not be used past this date)
- How much of the product is in each package
- What to do if an overdose occurs
- Information to help identify the product (lot or batch code)
- The name and address of the manufacturer, packer or distributor

Over-the-Counter Medicine: What's on the Label Continued

For more information, visit:

- FDA – Medicines in My Home http://www.fda.gov/medsinmyhome/MIMH_booklet_adult_label.htm
- FDA – What You Need to Know to Use Medicine Safely <http://www.fda.gov/usemedicinesafely>

Remember to check the label and safely get rid of expired medications. View the NNEPC's Medication Disposal Recommendations at http://www.mmc.org/mmc_body.cfm?id=4535.

If you have questions about your medications, contact your health care provider, pharmacist or the Northern New England Poison Center at 1-800-222-1222.

Taking medicine safely

Remember the 5 R's:

- Right medicine
- Right person
- Right dose
- Right time
- Right way

Selecting the right ingredient for the symptom

OTC cough and cold medications often contain two or more ingredients. Common ingredients found in cough and cold medications are pain relievers, decongestants, antihistamines, cough suppressants and expectorants.

Pain relievers will help with sore throat, headaches, body aches and fever. Common pain relievers are:

- Acetaminophen (Tylenol®)
- Ibuprofen (Motrin® or Advil®)
- Aspirin

Before taking a pain reliever, make sure that your cold/cough medication does not already contain one.

The **cough suppressant** (dextromethorphan) will help reduce coughing and the **expectorant** (guaifenesin) will help bring up secretions. Some prescription cough suppressants may contain the narcotic codeine.

Decongestants and **antihistamines** are used to help with other cold symptoms such as stuffy nose, sinus and chest congestion or runny nose. Common antihistamines and decongestants are:

- Diphenhydramine (Benadryl®)
- Pseudoephedrine (Sudafed®)
- Phenylephrine (Sudafed PE®)
- Chlorpheniramine
- Brompheniramine
- Phenylephrine
- Loratadine (Claritin®)
- Cetirizine (Zyrtec®)

Choose a medication for only the symptoms you have. Do not take more medication than you need. For example, if you have a stuffy nose but no cough, you do not need a cough suppressant.

Over-the-Counter Cough and Cold Medicine Drug Interactions

What is a Medication Interaction? An interaction is when two or more medications used together cause unwanted side effects or cause one of the drugs to either not work as well or become more dangerous.

Drug interactions can occur with OTC cough/cold medicines and other medications. (The following are just examples and should not replace reading the actual product label, talking with your health care provider or calling the Poison Center at 1-800-222-1222.)

Before using an Antihistamine:

Talk to a doctor or pharmacist if you are taking:

- sedatives or tranquilizers
- a prescription drug for high blood pressure or depression

Talk to a doctor if you have:

- glaucoma or difficulty in urination due to an enlarged prostate gland
- breathing problems, such as emphysema, chronic bronchitis or asthma

Avoid:

- alcoholic beverages

Alcohol, sedatives and tranquilizers may increase drowsiness with antihistamines!

Before using an antitussive (expectorants and cough suppressants)

Talk to a doctor or pharmacist if you are:

- taking sedatives or tranquilizers

Talk to a doctor if you have:

- glaucoma
- difficulty urinating due to an enlarged prostate gland

For additional examples of possible drug interactions from the FDA

<http://www.fda.gov/ForConsumers/ConsumerUpdates/ucm096386.htm>

Not on our mailing list? Visit www.nnepc.org to sign up!

Cough & Cold Medication Alert for Children Under Age 2

This is a reprint of a NH Child Health Month Coalition fact sheet. For a copy of this fact sheet, visit <http://www.chadkids.org/goto/childhealthmonth>.

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has reviewed the safety of over-the-counter (OTC) cough and cold medicines in infants and children under 2 years of age. The FDA recommends not using these drugs to treat infants and children under 2 years of age.

Children under age 2:

- Should not be given any cough or cold medicine unless recommended by a health care provider.
- Can suffer serious side effects from over the counter cough and cold medications.
- Have been accidentally poisoned because they were given too much medicine.

There are no science-based recommended doses for children less than 2 years of age. There is no proof that these medicines reduce cough and cold symptoms in small children. Talk to your provider about safe choices, like using a humidifier or salt water drops to help your child feel better.

- Check with your health care provider before you use any medication in small children, and use only as directed.
- Be sure your health care provider knows if your child is taking any prescription or over-the-counter medications, vitamins dietary or herbal supplements. Some may have the same or similar ingredients that could cause side effects or an overdose.
- And remember, store all medicines out of reach of children, and never refer to any medicine as candy.

For more information about this public health advisory:

<http://www.fda.gov/ForConsumers/ConsumerUpdates/ucm048689.htm>

Cough and Cold Medicine Abuse

Abuse of OTC cough and cold medicine is on the rise among teens. Abuse involves taking a very large dose of cold medicine that contains dextromethorphan (DXM). The effects depend on the dose, ranging from mild distortions to “out-of-body” experiences.

In addition to DXM, many OTC cough and cold medicines contain acetaminophen (commonly known as Tylenol®). Too much cough medicine can lead to an overdose of acetaminophen, which can cause liver damage.

Help prevent OTC cough and cold medicine abuse:

- Get educated – Learn more by ordering *Preventing Teen Cough Medicine Abuse: A Parent’s Guide* at http://www.mmc.org/mmc_body.cfm?id=4317&eformid=13
- Communicate with your kids – Make it clear you do not want them taking medicine without your knowing.
- Be a role model for proper medicine use – Discuss the importance of reading and following the directions on medicine labels.
- Know your child’s health – Be aware if your child is using cough and cold medicines outside of cold and flu season. Ask questions if you notice that any products are being used frequently.
- Clean out your medicine cabinet – Don’t stockpile medicines during the cold and flu season. This makes it hard to monitor what and how much medicine is being used. Do a medicine inventory. Discard expired and unused medicines. Write the date on the medicine when it is opened. Ask questions if you notice that any products have disappeared.

H1N1

The H1N1 flu virus is here this flu season along with seasonal flu. The H1N1 vaccine and seasonal flu vaccines are available through many different sources. The symptoms of H1N1 may be similar to other flu symptoms:

- cough
- fever
- runny or stuffy nose
- body aches
- chills
- sore throat

Treat the symptoms with fluids, bed rest and OTC medications as recommended by your health care provider or pharmacist.

Great Education Resource:

FDA’s Medicines in My Home –

<http://www.fda.gov/medsinmyhome>. An interactive and educational program about the safe and effective use of over-the-counter medicines.

If you suspect that you or a family member has H1N1, contact your health care provider. If you have not received an H1N1 vaccine, please contact your health care provider or use one the following resources:

Maine – <http://www.maine.gov/dhhs/boh/maineflu> or call 2-1-1 for the latest flu clinics available in your area

Vermont – <http://healthvermont.gov/panflu.aspx> or call 1-800-464-4343

New Hampshire – <http://www.nh.gov/h1n1> or call 603-271-8140

For further information, go to <http://www.cdc.gov/H1N1FLU>



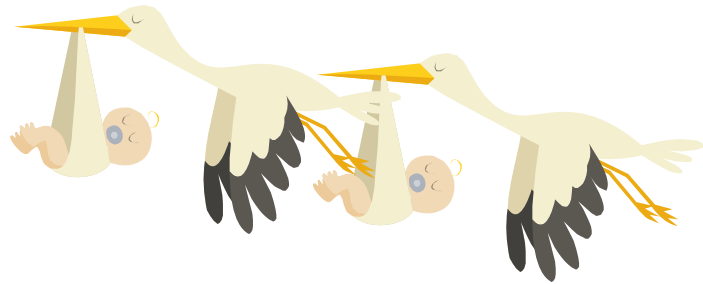
NH Educator Melissa Heinen's Bids Adieu to the NNEPC

The NNEPC has announced that Education and Research Coordinator and NH Educator, Melissa Heinen, has decided to trade chilly New Hampshire winters for even chillier Minnesota ones!

Melissa, who has been with the NNEPC for 5 years, has been an essential to the enhancement of the NNEPC education and research programs. With her background in epidemiology and injury prevention, Melissa brought a new perspective on health education to the NNEPC.

Melissa and her husband Erik, an environmental consultant, discovered this fall that they were expecting twins! With the exciting prospect of a pair of little ones (not to mention double diaper duty!) Melissa and Erik made the tough decision to return to their home state of Minnesota to be closer to their families.

The NNEPC looks forward to working with Melissa and her new health promotion program consulting firm, Salus Consulting, in the future.



Call the
Northern New England
Poison Center

1-800-222-1222

Voice/TTY/ 

Interpretation Services Available
Relay Service: 7-1-1

Poison Emergencies
Prevention Questions
Medication Safety
24hrs • Free • Confidential
www.nnepc.org

The Northern New England Poison Center is the nationally-certified regional poison center serving the states of Maine, New Hampshire and Vermont



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